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# The American RECORD GUIDE

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*formerly The American Music Lover*

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*Edited by*

PETER HUGH REED

December, 1945 . VOL. XII, No. 4

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## Editorial Notes

A letter from an Idaho reader, now in a hospital in Seattle, contains some interesting suggestions and some disillusioned remarks regarding new recording devices.

"May I ask what pressure could be brought to bear upon Victor and Columbia to record some new music? I think the following ought to be placed on records: Khatchaturian's *Piano Concerto*, Martinu's *Violin Concerto* and *Symphony No. 2*, a Memorial Album to Bartok (perhaps re-issues of his first and second string quartets), Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, some more Elgar (possibly re-pressings of H.M.V.'s), Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad—Rhapsody* (there's a recent H.M.V. disc which you've already called attention to), and Jan Peerce singing *Rachel, quand du Seigneur* from *La Juive*.

"I believe Peerce and Bjoerling are the two finest tenors today. They can sing anything well and better even than my old-time favorite, Richard Crooks. I am glad to see a revival in recordings of operatic excerpts by Victor. It is a good sign especially when such a good choice of talent is used.

"I've tried vainly to get a copy of Victor 11647, Charles Panzera's recording of Duparc's *Phidyle*; I heard this recording just once and I thought it a masterpiece.

"By the way, will there ever be any disc recordings made in which the length of the side will be increased so that we will not have repetitions of 26-minute compositions spread

onto eight sides, or six-minute works spread onto two 12-inch sides? This has always been a great irritation to me, because one could make a saving of at least one dollar on almost any four- or five-pocket album, and a saving of something on any number of single 12-inch discs, besides the space on shelves, not only in my collection, but on a dealer's shelves. Oh, well, we'll get even when a wire recorder is in my home after my discharge."

It is not necessary to bring pressure to bear upon any of the companies to get a new work recorded. It is important to consider the appeal of a new work, if it does not have a wide appeal it would not pay the companies to place it on records. There is a great deal of music which we would like to see on records, but its appeal is limited to the few rather than the many, and despite the fact that the few are what might be termed musical connoisseurs record companies cannot cater to that clientele and make money. If the work is an orchestral one, the expense of recording is far higher today than it was ten years ago; the Union has raised recording fees to a point which does not always seem justified, but the Union cannot discriminate in favor of worthwhile music which has a limited appeal. It is rumored that a recording of the Khatchaturian *Piano Concerto* has been made—one was released on English

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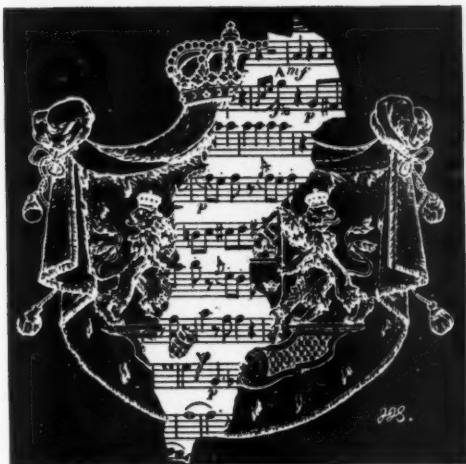


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# JUSSI B J O E R L I N G

## A DISCOGRAPHY

By F. F. Clough and C. J. Cuming

Jussi Bjoerling, the Swedish tenor who returned to the Metropolitan Opera this season after an absence of four years, has already a substantial number of records to his credit, despite his youth. Bjoerling was born in Sweden on February 2, 1911, and is consequently only thirty-four years old. It will be news to many that his phonographic debut was made at the age of eight. At that time he was a member of a family quartet, under the leadership of his father, and including his brothers Olle and Goesta, the latter of whom is also making a name for himself as a tenor in the Scandinavian and phonographic world. Back in 1920, these four singers, known as a Swedish male quartet, consisting of a father and three small sons—the eldest not yet ten years old—were having a great

success appearing in native costume among Scandinavian societies in this country. They toured the States, and, before returning to Europe, recorded for Columbia at least two discs of Swedish music—one of religious selections (psalms) and one of folk songs. Since these discs were made by the acoustic method, they have long vanished, but, by a collector wanting a complete set of Bjoerling recordings, they might be regarded as a real prize. However, it would no doubt be difficult to recognize his present vocal endowment in the weak boyish treble.

Jussi Bjoerling (Jussi is Swedish for John) is indubitably the "outstanding lyric tenor of his day", as the N. Y. Times once called him. In *The Gramophone* for March 1937, the operatic critic reviewing Bjoerling's first

record issued in England, said: "a young singer with such a splendid voice and obvious skill and intelligence should go very far indeed, if he takes himself and his art seriously." At that time his name was quite unknown to English audiences, and claims by His Masters Voice to have discovered a "new Caruso" were rightly discounted (and even now a comparison between two such different organs and techniques is fruitless). Although the record issued in March 1937 (DA1548—containing *Recondita armonia* from *Tosca* and *La donna è mobile* from *Rigoletto*) was the first to come before the English public, it was by no means his first adult effort: in fact, he had previously made a long list of recordings in his native tongue, which offer a striking commentary on the progress of a young singer. Perhaps in no other case can one proceed by such easy stages from—shall we say—the ridiculous to the sublime.

### First Solo Recordings

At the time of his real record debut in 1930 (the 1919/20 discs can only be treated as curiosities) he was only nineteen (his debut at the Stockholm Opera, as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, was still some two years in the future), so that one need not wonder at a certain immaturity of style and irresponsibility in the choice of repertoire. But when the material is worthy, even in the earliest of these recordings there is not only youthful exuberance but evidence of excellent training, which accounts for the high reputation he gained at so early an age. For the excellence of his training, the main credit must go to his chief teacher, John Forsell, who was himself once a Metropolitan artist and in his time regarded as the greatest Swedish baritone. Forsell, in the acoustic era, made many worthy recordings which are widely sought after by collectors in Europe as well as the United States. Among Bjoerling's earlier recordings X4436 is particularly noteworthy, as he was a member of the cast of Atterberg's opera *Fanal* (based on Heine's *Der Schelm von Bergen*) on the occasion of its first performance at the Royal Opera, Stockholm, on January 27, 1934; the disc is probably more or less contemporary with the première.

Bjoerling made a very successful guest appearance in Vienna in 1936, but his international fame dates from 1937. His first "red

label" recording was then issued by H.M.V., he made noteworthy appearances at Salzburg, and he visited the United States for the first time since his childhood tour. Subsequently he made several tours to different operatic centers in Europe and the Americas, but during the war he has mainly been found at the Stockholm Opera and has sung for the Swedish radio and in concert.

### Widely Known on Records

It is probably safe to say that, for every individual who has heard him in person, hundreds have made his acquaintance through his recordings. In no other case in the history of the phonograph has an artist developed his art *coram publico*; the extraordinary fact is that Bjoerling has been singing on discs for fifteen out of his thirty-four years! What the next fifteen years will have to show in the development of his art, we can only conjecture.

Only with the beginning of the war years did Bjoerling turn to lieder singing on records, and it must be confessed his efforts in this field have not been so consistently successful as his operatic recordings, on which his fame at present rests. A new series of operatic recordings was made in Stockholm in 1944, apparently to mark Bjoerling's nomination to the rank of "Swedish Court Singer". (Those so far issued are DA1836, 1837 and 1841.) It is to be hoped that with the passing of war conditions, and his return to the States, he may be given the opportunity to record some of his operatic repertoire complete instead of the snippets so far permitted, so that we may have an opportunity to judge him in a connected role through the medium of the phonograph. We hope also he will continue to make his recordings in Sweden, where recording technique is of a high quality, and the accompaniments under the direction of Nils Grevillius, a permanent conductor of the Royal Opera, are congenial both to the singer and the audience. Moreover, he has had in Sweden the benefits of a larger orchestra than he might be accorded elsewhere. European collectors have begun to regard uneven recording and poor orchestral balance as the rule rather than the exception in American recordings!

When Bjoerling celebrated his thirty-fourth birthday he also celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary as a concert artist. Naturally,

it is difficult today to recognize in the present singer the stocky little boy, who, with his brothers Goesta and Olle joined their treble voices to that of their father in a vocal quartet, yet it is this same Jussi who has become a leading lyric tenor in the operatic world. Success is something to achieve, but Bjoerling ruefully computes the few months out of the twelve that are allowed him for his family life. "I am forced to admit," he says with countless other great artists, "that success has its price." For Bjoerling is fond of his home. He is married to one of Sweden's most beautiful women, Anna Lisa Berg, who was crowned Queen of the Santa Lucia 1934 Festival, an honor conferred each year on "the fairest maid in all Stockholm". He is also the happy father of a growing family. The Bjoerling home is on the outskirts of Stockholm, amid flowering gardens. Here, for three short months each year, he lives according to his own fancy. He loves the sea and sails a boat during his period at home.

In the following record list, the majority have orchestral accompaniments conducted by Nils Grevillius; the few with piano are so marked and are all accompanied by Harry Ebert. The list is believed to be complete to the end of 1944, but owing to wartime difficulties of communication, there may possibly be some omissions. The X records are 10-inch H.M.V. plum label, pressed in England (some, during the war, in Sweden). The AL number is an Oslo pressing; the Victor numbers are given alongside the European where they exist; the DA and DB discs are H.M.V. ten-inch and 12-inch red label, pressed in many different quarters of the globe. A note of warning—some of the discs listed are no longer obtainable in England or Sweden, though possibly they still exist in other countries. Owing to present disturbed conditions (still prevailing despite the end of the war), it is impossible to give more precise indications of availability. Since most of the records are obtainable through England, any dealer who imports foreign discs can order any desired by a reader.

### Bjoerling's Recordings Part I

- X 3376 *Gondola Song* (De Curtis), and *For You Alone* (Geel).  
X 3377 *I Droemmen du aer mig naera* (Sjoegren), and *Vita Rosa* (Koerling).

- X 3466 *O Sweet Mystery of Life* (Herbert), and *Summer Night* (Schrader).  
X 3556 *Serenata* (Toselli), and *Today* (Arthur).  
X 3622 *Mattinata* (Leoncavallo), and *Violets* (*Salut d'amour*) (Elgar).  
X 3628 *Roméo et Juliette—Ah, lève-toi, soleil* (Gounod), and *Rigoletto—Questa o quella* (Verdi).  
X 3675 *Naer jag foer mig sjaelv* (Peterson-Berger), and *Bland skogens hoege furustammar* (Peterson-Berger).  
X 3683 *Violets of Montmartre—You are like a princess* (Kalman), and *Desert Song—Song of the Desert* (Romberg).  
X 3702 *Tantis Serenad* (Italian Song), and *Carmela* (De Curtis).  
X 3724 *Wish Me Good Night* (Ray), and *Be Mine* (Ball).  
X 3829 *Garden of Happiness* (Astroem), and *O, milde sang* (Toernquist).  
X 3879 *Flowers of Hawaii—Had I the Words and Keep your Kisses* (Abraham).  
X 3885 *Land of Smiles—You are my heart's delight and A Wreath of Apple-blossom* (Lehar).  
X 3928 *Why Do I Love* (Russian Folk Song), and *Min sommarmelodi* (Bickvor).  
X 3993 *Czardasfuerstin—Tango* (Kalman), and *Slut dina ogon* (Ammandt).  
X 4108 *Prince Igor—Cavatina* (Borodin), and *Serenade* (Laparra).  
X 4127 *Bacchanal* (Dahl), and *Brinnande gola flod* (Nyblom).  
X 4128 *Black Eyes* (Russian Folk Song), and *Tangoflikan* (K.O.W.A.).  
X 4176 *Min laengtan ar du* (Bode), and *Klownens Tango* (Handberg-Joergensen).  
X 4179 *Ninon* (Kaper and Jurman), and *Gitarren klingar* (Gyldmark).  
X 4204 *Sag att Du evigt* (Soederblom), and *Var det en droem* (Bergren-Armand).  
X 4205 *Tosca—Recondita armonia* and *E lucevan le stelle* (Puccini).  
X 4220 *Rigoletto—La donna è mobile* (Verdi), and *Pagliacci—Vesti la giubba* (Leoncavallo).  
X 4265 *Il Trovatore—Di quella pira* (Verdi), and *Cavalleria Rusticana—Siciliana* (Mascagni).  
X 4436 *Fanciulla del West—Ch'ella mi creda* (Puccini), and *Fanal—I maenner oever lag och raett* (Atterberg).  
X 4449 *Wedding Waltz* (Dardanell and Den-

- nie), and *Lilla Princessan* (Princess Ingrid's Bethrothal Waltz).
- X 4716 *Tonerna* (Sjoeborg), and *Sommer-natt—Serenade* (Schrader).
- X 4720 (AL 2324) *Ack, Vaermeland de skoena* (Swedish Folk Song), and *Allt under himmelens faeste* (Swedish Folk Song).
- X 4723 *Ay, ay, ay* (Freire), and *Sadko—Hindu Song* (Rimsky-Korsakoff).
- X 4777 *Sverige* (Stenhammar), and *Land, du vaelsegnade* (Althen).
- X 4832 *Dreams of Long Ago* (Caruso), and *Sjung din hela laengtan* (Widestedt).
- X 6090 *La Belle Hélène—Paris' Song* (Offenbach), and *Bettelstudent—Ich hab' kein Geld* (Milloecker).
- X 6146 *Bettelstudent—Ich setz' den Fall* (Milloecker), and *Zigeunerbaron—Wer uns getraut?* (Strauss). Duets with H. Schymberg.
- X 6235 *Sjung om studentens lyckliga d'ar* (Prince Gustav), and *Mammar du Sverige* (Wide) (with chorus).
- X 7077 *Noen i offredstid* (Nordquist), and *Bisp Thomas frihetssang* (Nordquist).

## Part II

H.M.V. Red Label Records with  
Victor Record Numbers

### 10-inch discs.

- | H.M.V.  | Victor |   |
|---------|--------|---|
| DA 1548 | 4372   | <i>Tosca—Recondita armonia</i> (Puccini), and <i>Rigoletto—La donna è mobile</i> (Verdi).             |
| DA 1582 | 4379   | <i>Ideale</i> (Tosti), and <i>O sole mio</i> (Di Capua).  |
| DA 1584 | 4408   | <i>Tosca—E lucevan le stelle</i> (Puccini), and <i>Fanciulla del West—Ch'ella mi creda</i> (Puccini). |
| DA 1594 | —      | <i>For You Alone</i> (Geehl—In English), and <i>Ideale</i> (Tosti).                                   |
| DA 1607 | —      | <i>Only a Rose</i> (Friml—In English), and <i>O sole mio</i> (Di Capua).                              |
| DA 1701 | 2136   | <i>Trovatore—A, si ben mio</i> , and <i>Di quella pira</i> (Verdi).                                   |
| DA 1704 | —      | <i>Caecilie and Morgen</i> (Strauss). Both in Ger-  |

- |         |      |   |
|---------|------|---|
| DA 1705 | 2195 | man with piano accompaniment.   |
|         |      | <i>Adelaide</i> (Beethoven). In German with piano accompaniment.                          |
| DA 1797 | 4351 | <i>Svarta Rosor and Saefm saef, Susa</i> (Sibelius). In Swedish with piano accompaniment. |
| DA 1836 | —    | <i>Andrea Chenier—Come un bel di</i> , and <i>Fedora—Amortivieta</i> (Giordano).          |
| DA 1837 | —    | <i>Ballo in Maschera—Di tu se fedele</i> , and <i>Rigoletto—Questa o quella</i> (Verdi).  |
| DA 1841 | —    | <i>Turandot—Nessun dorma</i> (Puccini), and <i>Mattinata</i> (Leoncavallo).               |

### 12-inch discs.

- |         |         |  |
|---------|---------|--|
| DB 3049 | 12039   | <i>La Bohème—Che gelida manina</i> (Puccini), and <i>Aida—Celeste Aida</i> (Verdi).  |
| DB 3302 | 12150   | <i>Africana—O Paradiso</i> (Meyerbeer), and <i>La Gioconda—Cielo e mar</i> (Ponchielli).   |
| DB 3603 | 12635   | <i>Manon—En ferment les yeux</i> (In French) (Massenet), and <i>Carmen—Air de la fleur</i> (Bizet) (In French).                  |
| DB 3665 | 13588   | <i>Stabat Mater—Cujus animam</i> (Rossini), and <i>Requiem—Ingemisco</i> (Verdi).  |
| DB 3887 | 13790   | <i>Maria—M'appari tutt' amor</i> (Flotow), and <i>Faust—Salut, demeure</i> (Gounod) (In French).                                 |
| DB 5759 | 12725   | <i>Staendchen</i> (Schubert), and <i>An Sylvia</i> (Schubert) (Both in German).  |
| DB 5787 | 12831   | <i>An die Leier</i> (Schubert) (In German), and <i>Sko-gen Sover</i> (Alfvén); <i>Morgon</i> (Eklof). With piano accompaniments. |
| DB 6119 | 11-8440 | <i>La Bohème—O soave fanciulla</i> (Puccini), and <i>Rigoletto—E il sol dell'anima</i> (Verdi). Duets                            |

(Continued on page 95)

R. F. Mann



the song is intended for a soprano or an alto, for he ranges frequently in the same song from the lowest to the highest register. Several of his most glorious songs begin in the deepest pitch and gradually rise to the highest, so that the same singer can rarely master both. Schumann, to be sure, occasionally tries to obviate this difficulty by adding a melody of lower pitch, which he then indicates by smaller notes placed under the melody of his original conception. But how often he thereby spoils his most beautiful flights, his most inspired climaxes! Two instances among many occur to me,—*Ich grolle nicht*, and *Stille Thraenen*,—for which one will scarcely ever find an interpreter who can do equal justice to the beginning and the end. But if, on the other hand, a singer has a voice at his command capable of such a feat, he will produce the greater effect. Thus, I remember as a child, in 1858, having heard Frau Schroeder-Devient, then fifty-five years old, sing *Ich grolle nicht*, and never shall I forget the shiver that ran down the spine at the last climax. The beautiful timbre of the voice was of course lacking; but the overwhelming power of the expression was so irresistible that every one was carried away.

To be able to sing Schumann is a special faculty which many excellent singers do not have. I have heard the same singer render Schubert to perfection, and Schumann absolutely badly. For with Schubert the most of what is to be done is explicitly expressed; while with Schumann one must understand the art of reading between the lines—of interpreting a half-told tale. A symphony, too, of Schubert plays itself, as it were; but a symphony of Schumann has to be studied with a subtle perception in order to uncover and bring out what is veiled in the master's intentions. Otherwise it will lose much of its effect. In speaking above of the excessive demands upon the compass of the voice in Schumann's songs, I refer chiefly to those more broadly composed. The smaller and more delicate ones do not usually strain a voice of ordinary register.

### Unattained Masterpieces

A quite peculiar stamp of genius is impressed upon Schumann's epic romances and ballads. In this genre he has created unattained masterpieces. I will cite as instances

Chamisso's *Die Loewenbraut*, and (from Opus 45) Eichendorff's *Der Schatzgraeber*, and Heine's *Abend am Strande*. In the last named Schumann attains a realistic effect of great intensity. How pictorial is here the description of the different peoples, from the dweller on the bank of the Ganges to the "dirty Laplanders" who in a truly impressionistic style "quack and scream"! Strangely enough, there are as yet not many who both feel and are able to render these effects, and they are accordingly scarcely ever heard in a concert hall. A ballad of popularity of which (according to E. F. Wenzel) vexed Schumann, was Heine's *Two Grenadiers*, because he regarded it, and perhaps rightly, as belonging to his weakest productions. A volume which contains things of the very highest order, and which for some incomprehensible reason is almost unknown, is Opus 98A, *Lieder and Gesaenge aus Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister"*. Once in a while one may, to be sure, stumble upon the magnificent, grandly molded ballad, *Was hoer ich draussen vor dem Thor* but one never hears the most beautiful of all, *Kenn'st du das Land wo die Citronen Blueh'n?* with which I have seen a gifted vocalist move an audience to tears.

### Art and Its Appeal

It is rarely the happiest inspirations of a creative spirit that win the hearts of the many. In that respect the musical intelligence of the so-called cultivated society leaves much to be desired. However, the other arts are scarcely more favorably placed. Everywhere it is a cheap art which has a monopoly of appeal to the general intelligence.

It cannot be maintained that Schumann was the first to accord a conspicuous role to the accompaniment of his songs. Schubert had anticipated him as no other of his predecessors had done, in making the piano depict the mood. But what Schubert began, Schumann further developed; and woe to the singer who tries to render Schumann without keeping a close watch of what the piano is doing, even to the minutest shades of sound. I have no faith in a renderer of Schumann's songs who lacks appreciation of the fact that the piano has fully as great a claim upon interest and study as the voice of the singer. Nay; I would even venture to assert that, up to a certain point, he who

cannot play Schumann cannot sing him either. In his treatment of the piano, Schumann was furthermore the first who, in a modern spirit, utilized the relation between song and accompaniment, which Wagner has later developed to a degree that fully proves what importance he attached to it. I refer to the carrying of the melody by the piano, or the orchestra, while the voice is engaged in the recitative. Heaven preserve me, however, from insinuating that Wagner consciously could have received an impulse from Schumann! A dyed-in-the-wool Wagnerian would, of course, regard even a hint of such a possibility as an outrageous want of respect for the master of Bayreuth which would amount almost to an insult. But, for all that, it is a fact that contemporaries influence each other whether they want to or not. That is one of nature's eternal laws, to which we are all subject. You will perhaps ask, Where is, then, the mutual influence of Rossini, Beethoven, and Weber? And my response is, It is of a negative character, and accordingly still present. But in the above mentioned particular case—that of Schumann and Wagner—it is absolutely positive. It is, however true that Schumann only hints at the things out of which Wagner constructs a perfect system. But there is this to be said, that Schumann is here the foreseeing spirit who planted the tree which later, in the modern musical drama, was to bear such glorious fruit.

### The Youthful Spirit

That gradually increasing conservatism which, in the case of an artist, is usually a mark of failing powers, was never noticeable in Schumann. Even though his creative spirit went out in the darkness of insanity, this in no wise affected his views of art, which remained fresh and youthful to the very last. His enthusiasms for the young Brahms is a striking proof of that receptivity as regards the new which did not desert him even on the downward incline of his scantily allotted career. We again hereby a beautiful glimpse of the purity of his character, just as it revealed itself in his younger years in his relation to Mendelssohn and others. And just as Schumann was the first interpreter in modern music of the profounder emotions and true intensity of sentiment who could exclaim with Beethoven, when the latter had

finished his *Missa Solemnis*, "From the heart it has come, to the heart it shall go," so now, the spirit of unreason, pettiness, and envy having passed away, all hearts, old and young, respond jubilantly to Schumann's art, and honor him as a man, pioneer, and artist. Schumann's conceptions of art will again come to their right when that army of inflated arrogance which wrongfully have adopted the title of "Wagnerians" and "Lisztians" will have lost their influence. I discriminate, however, expressly between the true and genuine admirers of these two mighty masters and the howling horde which calls itself "—ians". These patentees of speculative profundity do not know the most priceless jewel of art—naïveté. How, then are they to love Schumann, who possessed this rare gift in so rich a measure? Many of the so-called Liszt performers render Schumann in a manner which is most significant. In most cases they will, indeed, give you the genuine Liszt, but, on the other hand, Schumann falsified beyond recognition. All attempts at artistic treatment and a well studied execution of details cannot compensate for the lack of that warm, deep tone which a real interpreter of Schumann will know how to produce. As different as Mendelssohn's art of orchestration is from that of Wagner, so different is the coloring of Schumann from that of Liszt; and to give this a vivid expression on the piano imposes so great a task upon the performer that it calls his whole personality into play. He must be able to orchestrate upon the piano. Only then will he become a "Schumann-player" in the sense in which we speak, for instance, of "Chopin-players"—that is to say, performers who, to be sure, are able to play a good deal besides, but play Chopin to perfection. Wagner somewhere expresses the opinion that a sympathetic nature is required even to comprehend his meaning: this is no less true of Schumann, who, in his demands upon the player's comprehension, ventures to propound this postulate, "Perhaps only genius can completely understand genius".

### Artistic Interrelation

That these lines, while embodying much of my own personal conception of Schumann, also in a considerable degree are concerned with Mendelssohn and Wagner, was in the nature of the case, and thus scarcely to be

avoided. These masters stand in a peculiar relation of reciprocity to each other. Each has, as above shown, either sought to be influenced by the other, or purposely sought to avoid being influenced. Like mighty planets in the firmament, they either attracted or repelled each other. Each owes the other much, both positively and negatively. As regards Schumann, he failed, perhaps, of the full achievement which his rare gifts entitle us to expect, because his need for being influenced is intimately connected with that germ of early decay which prevented him from consistently pressing on to his goal. But whatever his imperfections, he is yet one of the princes of art, a real German spirit to whom Heine's profound words concerning Luther may well apply:

"In him all the virtues and all the faults of the Germans are in the grandest way united; so that one may say that he personally represents the wonderful Germany."

### Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 85)

Decca records this past month. We would very definitely plug for some recordings of Martinu's music; there was a charming trio of his recorded just before the war on French H.M.V. discs which Victor might consider bringing out. There have been quite a few requests for Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, both in England and this country, but nothing has ever come of them. This is understandable because the work calls for soprano and baritone soloists, chorus and orchestra, all of which involves considerable expense. It would hardly be the type of work one could expect an American company to record; it should be done in England and later released in this country as well. H.M.V., in England, has brought out a recording of Vaughan Williams' recent *Symphony in D major*, which we would like to see Victor repress here. Yet, we doubt that this work would have the popularity of the composer's *London Symphony* or his *Symphony in F minor*. It is a pastoral work, in which the mood throughout is far too restrained for its own good. Our admiration for it (yes, we have the recording) is based on its serenity, which is a rare quality in music of these times.

As for a Bartok Memorial Album, this is not exactly needed, for what memorial could we ask better than the album of *Bartok Plays Bartok*, which Continental brought out in March 1943 (set 102, four 12-inch discs, price \$4.50)? It contains some of the noted composer's best piano music and Bartok proved himself in performance a brilliant virtuoso; moreover, the recording tone is unusually lifelike.

It is a pleasure to have someone support our plea for a re-issue in this country of Boult's performance of Butterworth's poetic *Shropshire Lad Rhapsody*—a work we place alongside of Delius' *Brigg Fair—Rhapsody* and Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun*. Undoubtedly, Mr. Peerce will turn his attention to the *La Juive* aria in the near future; our correspondent's request may well start the ball rolling. His admiration of Messrs. Peerce and Bjoerling is shared, we feel certain, by a great many record buyers, for these are artists who can generally be relied upon. The French baritone, Charles Panzera, made quite a number of particularly cherishable recordings of French songs, but we believe that their sales hardly paid for the pressings. This is a most unfortunate state of affairs, but when we consider that Panzera has never sung in this country nor had the benefits of national publicity, we can hardly expect the uninitiated to investigate his recordings. Moreover, many people are incapable of judging true artistry themselves; they have to be told about such things, and to them the views of a few discriminating critics are not sufficient; they need the endorsement of the crowd and the ballyhoo that goes with general publicity.

In plastics, we are given to understand, longer-playing records can be made, but the fineness of the lining would prevent satisfactory performance by such records on many machines, more particularly those equipped with built-in sapphire pickups, since such needles are usually too broad in radius for fine-lined recording. Moreover, the majority of pickups are too heavy. There would have to be many changes made in commercial equipment to assure good reproduction of the longer-playing record. That such records would be cheaper is a delusion; with additional music on them there is every reason to believe the opposite; artists would demand higher royalties, and the cost of the

recording venture, as in the case of an orchestral work, would not be covered very quickly if the price were not higher. Most people are unaware that the standard 12-inch record plays longer today than it did ten years ago. Victor has successfully recorded up to five minutes and twenty seconds on a single side—Toscanini's performance of the *Liebestod*, on one record face, is a case in point. Some foreign recordings have got even more onto a single face. We recently heard the Couperin and Rameau recordings that Les Discophiles Francais put out in Paris; all are excessively fine-lined, permitting up to nearly six minutes of music to one side, but these records require a needle with a fine-radius, actually less than .002, to do them justice. On one friend's machine they were not reproducible; on our own equipment, with the right type of needle, they were excellent sounding. Such records, however, would not wear as long as the standard length recording, which is around four minutes and twenty seconds. Our correspondent is definitely laboring under a delusion if he thinks the home wire recording outfit, which he contemplates getting, will prove as good as a commercial recording—this was brought out last month in an article, *Things to Come*. The home wire outfits we have heard are no better or worse than the home-recording attachments that were sold on several commercial machines prior to the war. Disc recording today is finer than it ever was; the new orchestral records are more realistic than we ever dreamed they would be several years ago. And Victor has shown in its new operatic series, issued this past month, what miracles can be accomplished when time, patience and the will to experiment for better results enter into the recording. It is no secret that the recorders in the past came into a hall and just set up equipment and recorded; if they got good results it was largely fortuitous. Today, both the engineer and the recording director make tests with microphones in various places until the best results are obtainable. This is not to say that further improvements cannot be made in reproduction, indeed we expect them to happen as time goes on.

\* \* \* \* \*

Having told our readers we aimed to get the magazine out earlier, we had considerable correspondence regarding the late date of

issue of the November number. When review material comes in after the first of the month, as it did in November, we can hardly be expected to publish early. Production with the record companies is not up to normal yet, and there are many hitches between making a plan and carrying it out. Had we published the November issue around the tenth or twelfth as planned, we would have had no record reviews in it. The same holds true this month.

★ ★ ★

This being the first Holiday Season since the ending of a long war, we want to extend to all our readers our very best wishes. To those who have come home from the far-flung warfronts, we offer our warmest and sincerest wishes for a wonderful Christmas—those of you who spent last Christmas and the Christmas before on the battlefield deserve the very best in holiday celebrations that can be given you and it is our sincere hope that in the pleasantness of this Christmas at home, those others will be completely forgotten and never brought to mind.

#### Bierling Discography

(Continued from page 90)

- |         |   |   |
|---------|---|---|
|         |   | with Hjoerdis Schymberg (soprano).<br><i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i> —<br><i>Addio alla madre</i> (Leoncavallo), and <i>Pagliacci</i> —<br><i>Vesti la giubba</i> (Leoncavallo). |
| DB 6163 | — |   |
| DB 5393 | — | (Italian coupling) <i>La Bohème</i> — <i>Che gelida manina</i> , and <i>La Gioconda</i> —<br><i>Cielo e mar</i> .   |

NOTE: All the red label records are sung in Italian, to orchestral accompaniments conducted by Nils Grevillius, except where otherwise indicated. The above list contains no issues later than December 1944.

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## FROM DUET TO SEXTET

By Stephen Fasset

### Part 5

Why such a popular duet as *Ai nostri monti* (*Trovatore*) should have had to wait until June 1908 for its debut on a Victor Red Seal record, is difficult to understand. But when Victor finally got around to the inevitable, they did a royal job, and the performance of Louise Homer and Enrico Caruso (89018) is regarded still as a phonograph classic. Smooth-flowing, rich-toned vocalism was always Homer's forte, and Caruso was able to impart far more lyricism to Manrico's phrases in 1908 than he was in 1914, when he again recorded the duet with Schumann-Heink as his partner. It should be made clear, however, that there are two different recordings of the Homer-Caruso *Ai nostri monti*, both having the same number, which may be distinguished from each other by the fact that in the first Caruso's voice does not rise to a higher note at the end, as it does in the second. The second version sounds as though it might have been made at a later date, for Caruso's singing seems less lyrical than it does in the earlier version, which is the one preferred by most collectors.

The subject of different versions of the same selection (each bearing the same number), performed by the same artist or artists is a troublesome problem. Often the differences can be clearly heard, as in the case just mentioned; sometimes they can be detected merely by comparing the amount of grooved space on the record. Measurements alone, however, are not always a safe guide because many records were later issued in dubbed form, with wider or narrower grooving than the original, timing the same but not measuring the same. An example is Caruso's *Di quella pira* (*Trovatore*). Compare an early single-faced pressing with a double-faced edition, and you will find that, although the measurements are very different, the performance is exactly the same; the master used in pressing the later editions of the record was actually a re-recording (a "dubbed" copy) whose groove-width was not identical to the groove-width of the original. But perhaps this is, for the moment, enough about a matter so complex that it deserves an entire article to itself. . . .

The recording of *La bas dans la montagne* (89019) which Victor issued in July 1908



exerts an irresistible fascination because it combines the most famous Carmen of all time with a Don José who would have been considered distinguished in any period of operatic history—Emma Calvé and Charles Dalmores. Their finely-styled performance, with its exquisitely wrought phrasing, is not flawless, however, and at the end the voices sag slightly in pitch. Somehow, as a matter of fact, the record has never quite come up to my expectations, and, though I can't say exactly why, I am inclined to blame mechanical defects in the recording technique of the time for my slight disappointment.

Two *Romeo et Juliette* duets (Victor discs 74108 and 64091), sung by Alice Nielsen and Florencio Constantino and issued in July and September of 1908, are mentioned here only in passing, for the inconsequential duet recordings by these two singers were discussed in Part 3 of this series of articles, and I have nothing more to say about them.

In August, Victor released what were apparently the only duets ever recorded by Emma Eames and Louise Homer: the ingratiating *Dome épais* from *Lakmé* (89020), and *Du Aermste* from *Lohengrin* (89021). Scarce collectors items in their original form, they were re-issued on a double-faced disc by IRCC some years ago. The singing offers much to admire but its effectiveness is somewhat vitiated by poor recording. I doubt if Eames ever sang *Lakmé*, but at the Metropolitan Elsa in *Lohengrin* was one of her best and most famous roles, while Homer was often heard as Ortrud.

With the exception of a *Romeo* duet by Nielsen and Constantino, already mentioned as a September release, there were no more Victor Red Seal duets in 1908 until one was finally announced in December. It was *Vengeance is mine* from *Samson and Dalilah*, sung in English by Louise Homer and Emilio De Gogorza (87501). This rather odd little disc never sold well, became a rarity, and was re-issued some years ago by the long dormant Historic Record Society of Chicago.

As far as multiple-voice recordings were concerned, the year 1909 was not an active one for the Victor company, but, as we shall see, the lull was only temporary. In February 1909, Victor offered two splendid recordings from their Italian studios. The first was the scene from *Ernani*, *O sommo Carlo*, sung by Battistini with the assistance

of Emilia Corsi, Luigi Colazza, Aristodemo Sillich and chorus. Its original Victor number was 92046; later it was renumbered in the 89000 series and finally given a third number when it was chosen several years ago for Victor's *Voices of the Golden Age of Opera* album. One's enjoyment of Battistini's dramatic, magnificently voiced performance is, unfortunately, marred by the presence of the chorus. As I have remarked before, a chorus was something the acoustic method of recording could not seldom capture without painful results. Still, since it is one of the few good examples of Battistini's singing that can be obtained easily today, it should not be overlooked.

Also issued in February was the second of the two recordings mentioned in the preceding paragraph—*Nega se puoi la luce* from *Amleto*, sung by the sensational Spanish coloratura, Maria Galvany and the equally sensational young Italian baritone, Titta Ruffo, on disc 92500. Galvany's forte was her astonishing, rapid-fire staccati; in the pure cantilena of this duet her singing lacks the melting appeal which an artist like Galli-Curci could have given, but nevertheless in this recording she ably seconds Ruffo. For, to my mind, the memorable feature of this performance is Ruffo's inspired singing. His voice pours out effortlessly in a finely modulated, warmly accented stream of sound. I can never hear this, or any of his many successful discs, without thinking: if only we had an Italian baritone like that today! Incidentally, this was the same *Hamlet* duet recorded in French by Sembrich and De Gogorza which has already been discussed.

The Eames-De Gogorza recording of *Mira d'acerbe lagrime* from *Trovatore* (89022), issued in June 1909, has been criticized frequently and severely. But, if the interpretation falls down, at least the supreme technical standards of the Golden Age are revealed in the passage work of the *Vivra contende* section, so cleanly, so incisively negotiated by Eames. Once when I commented upon this to Mme. Eames, she replied: "Yes, it's a good clean job, but I was upset the day I made it, and I have never been satisfied with the record." Perhaps the truth of the matter is that Leonora was not for Eames, although she sang it several times with Caruso in 1908. On the other hand,

(Continued on page 116)



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## RECORD NOTES AND

# REVIEWS

*It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.*

*We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.*

*All prices given are without tax.*

### Orchestra

HANDEL: *The Messiah*—Hallelujah Chorus; and MENDELSSOHN: *Athalie*—War March of the Priests; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction of Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc 11-8985, price \$1.00.

▲ Mr. Fiedler is in fine fettle here and the Boston "Pops" plays with vehemence and rich sonority. The old question of transcribing classical music for modern orchestra is brought up by the present performance of the celebrated *Hallelujah Chorus*. But, let it be said at the beginning, there is no disservice to Handel in this orchestral exploitation of the triumphant finale to the second part of his famed oratorio; there is every bit of exultation in the playing of the music here that we get from a large chorus. Such music as this loses little in transition; perhaps the

affirmation of Christianity embodied in the words has given it its great appeal, yet few listeners are aware of the words when a chorus is singing unless they have the printed text, and most of us by now should know that text, for the *Hallelujah Chorus* is one of the mightiest things of its kind in all music. The fugal section of the chorus reiterates the words "And He shall reign forever and ever"; indeed, the whole chorus is based on only three sentences of text, and the endless repetitions of the word "Hallelujah" leave no doubt of the triumphant spirit of the whole. A year ago Victor gave us a recording of this music by the Sadler's Wells Chorus of London (disc 11-8670), but I suspect that the present disc may find a larger audience, which is not to say that the other is undeserving. But Mr. Fiedler goes to town here, and his fervor will be noted by many.

Mendelssohn's march on the reverse face has not been recorded for sixteen years; the old disc by Mengelberg and the N. Y. Philharmonic has been retained in the Victor catalogue too long, since its reproduction is far from satisfactory in these times. This excerpt from incidental music to Racine's *Athalie*, which Mendelssohn wrote on commission from the King of Prussia around 1844, is not of great consequence; for one thing, it is strikingly reminiscent of the *Wedding March* from the *Midsummer Night's Dream* music. However, it is an adroitly written composition. Mr. Fiedler is a fervent spokesman for the music, and gives it a telling performance. The recording of both these works is excellent.

—P.H.R.

# Superb!

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## OTHER NEW RELEASES FOR YOUR RECORD LIBRARY

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA, Eugene Ormandy, Conductor: *Nutcracker Suite*—Tchaikovsky. Album M/DM 1020, \$3.50.

ARTUR RUBINSTEIN, Pianist: *Concerto No. 3*, in C Minor—Beethoven. With Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra. Album M/DM 1016, \$4.50.

E. POWER BIGGS, Organist: *Sonatas for Organ and Orchestra*—Mozart. With the Arthur Fiedler Sinfonietta, Arthur Fiedler, Conductor. Album M 1019, \$3.50.

WANDA LANDOWSKA, Harpsichordist: *Goldberg Variations*—J. S. Bach. Album M/DM 1022, \$6.75.

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Désiré Defauw, Conductor: *The Birds*—Respighi. Showpiece SP 14, \$2.25.

WILLIAM PRIMROSE, Violist: *Jamaican Rumba, Matty Rag, Coozie, From San Domingo*—Benjamin. Record 11-8947, \$1.00.

NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Hans Kindler, Conductor: *Dream Pantomime* (Hansel and Gretel)—Humperdinck. Record 11-8948, \$1.00.

ARTURO TOSCANINI and the NBC Symphony Orchestra: *The Skaters Waltz*—Waldteufel. Record 11-8949, \$1.00.

MISCHA ELMAN, Violinist: *Meditation* from "Thaïs"—Masseuet; *Humoresque*—Dvořák. Record 11-8950, \$1.00.

BOSTON "POPS" ORCHESTRA, Arthur Fiedler, Conductor: *Hallelujah Chorus* (The Messiah)—Handel; *War March of the Priests* (from "Athalie")—Mendelssohn. Record 11-8955, \$1.00.

GLADYS SWARTHOUT, Mezzo-soprano: *I Wonder As I Wander* (Appalachian Folk Song). With Victor Orchestra, Jay Blackton, Conductor. *Cantiga De Ninar* (Lullaby). With Lester Hodges, Pianist, and Lucien Schmidt, Cellist. Record 10-1181, \$0.75.

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CA VICTOR RED SEAL RECORDS 



**HUMPERDINCK:** *Hansel and Gretel—Dream Pantomime*; played by the National Symphony Orchestra, direction of Hans Kindler. Victor disc 11-8948, price \$1.00.

▲ Special performances of *Hansel and Gretel* at Christmastime are an old tradition at the opera. And now, not inappropriately, Victor brings us this recording of the music which closes the second act of the opera—the so-called *Dream Pantomime* during which fourteen angels come down from the starry heights to perform a solemn dance around the sleeping children in the woods. This music has long appealed to grown-ups as well as youngsters. At this late day it is useless to call attention to its Wagnerian characteristics; we have come to accept them. Humperdinck was an admirer and friend of Wagner; when the latter in 1882 refused to add music to his Transformation Scene in *Parsifal* to meet the slowness of the machinery that moved the revolving scenery, it was Humperdinck who stepped in and wrote the extra bars, which Wagner approved. Later, when the scenery was manipulated more quickly, Humperdinck's added bars were withdrawn. I suspect that the Wagnerian influence has always been one of the prime reasons that Humperdinck's music has caught on.

The music of the *Dream Pantomime* uses part of the *Sandman's Song* and the beautiful chorale, in four-part harmony, heard at the beginning of the overture. Humperdinck planned his thematic material much in the manner of Wagner, and like him repeated his best themes effectively in various parts of a work.

It hardly seems true that the Boult-B.B.C. Orchestra recording of this music (Victor disc 11832) is outdated, but since it was made in 1935 it has doubtless come up for replacement. Kindler and his orchestra give a satisfactory performance and the recording is tonally rich and full, but I feel that Kindler's phrasing is not as clean as Boult's; moreover he tends toward lushness. However, many people will probably want a modern recording of this music and there are those who like the Kindler type of performance. —P.H.R.

**RESPIGHI:** *The Birds*, Suite for Small Orchestra; played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, direction of Desiré Defauw. Victor set SP-14, two discs, price \$2.25.

▲ Defauw recorded this work over a decade ago with the Brussels Royal Conservatory Orchestra but that recording has long been withdrawn. Since this suite is one of descriptive and humorous charm, illustrating Respighi's talents as an orchestrator, it deserves this re-recording made under more auspicious circumstances than previously. Indeed, it is the recording here, which is singularly lifelike and clear, that arouses the greatest interest in the set. The Chicago Symphony, since returning to Victor after an absence of over a decade, has proved to be one of the best sounding orchestras on records, an achievement due to the work of the Victor engineers, since others did not have the same success with the ensemble.

Respighi's delightful suites for orchestra, based on old dances and airs for the lute, proved so successful that he was induced to write a third suite on old melodies. Here, he turned his attention to pieces by composers who wrote for the instrumental forerunners of the piano—the harpsichord and the clavichord. It will be recalled that composers of the classical period gave imaginative and fantastic names to many of their pieces; from these Respighi chose those that referred to birds.

The suite contains five sections. The opening Prelude mostly after B. Pasquini, includes interludes drawn from material of the other four selections. This is followed by *The Dove* (after Jacques de Gallot), in which soft, muted strings and harp provide a background for the oboe melody in the beginning. Later, the violins take over for the oboe. *The Hen* (after Rameau), which follows, is a quick movement, adroitly scored to bring out the humor of Rameau's essentially descriptive piece. *The Nightingale* (after an anonymous English composer) is an *Andante mosso*, effectively scored, with tender allusions to a bird which proved more garrulous in life, when I heard it, than dulcet-toned. But the tradition still prevails that the nightingale is the bird of love. *The Cuckoo* (after Pasquini) is a quick movement, quite in keeping with a bird that formerly intrigued composers. This final excerpt is full of piquant humor, which Respighi has cleverly pointed up in his orchestration.

Music like this may be far from satisfactory as a steady diet, but there is no denying that Respighi has written a clever suite, in

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which there is a certain gentle charm and humor, as well as a stylistic elegance, which are not without appeal. Defauw plays the work with a crisp, scintillating style, not unreminiscent of a harpsichordist's style. The Suite is scored for flute, oboe, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, harp, celesta, and the usual strings. It is the composer's ingenious use of his instruments which delights one here, and the fine clarity and naturalness of their reproduction in this Victor recording. —P.H.R.

**SHOSTAKOVITCH:** *Symphony No. 6*, and **KABALEVSKY:** *Colas Breugnon—Overture*; played by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Fritz Reiner, conductor. Columbia Set M or MM 585, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ This symphony was written in 1939, two years after the appearance of the *Fifth Symphony*, and received its initial performance in December of that year, in Moscow. It was first heard in America in November of the following year at a concert of the Philadelphia Orchestra under Stokowski, which was also broadcast and recorded at that time. Shostakovitch had originally intended his *Sixth Symphony* to be a tribute to the memory of Nikolai Lenin and planned to write a work on a large scale, with chorus; but for some reason he changed his mind and wrote a symphony without any programmatic connotations.

The work is cast in a most unusual mold. It consists of a protracted *Largo* as an opening movement, followed by two short rapid ones. Opinions differ as to the musical worth of this symphony. There are those who find the opening *Largo* one of the most impressive movements that have been penned by Shostakovitch; and there are many more, I believe, who consider it a swollen, amorphous mass, without much direction or inner urge. All are agreed, however, that the work as a whole can not measure up to his *First* or *Fifth Symphonies*. The two short movements are rather brash, and are written in the sardonic style for which he was chided by Soviet officials in 1936. He had always displayed this streak in his music; and even since his reinstatement in the good graces of the authorities, has written many movements that could be construed as "petty-bourgeois

sensationalism". But apparently the "authorities" now close their eyes to this propensity, philosophically realizing that it is part and parcel of Shostakovitch's make-up and cannot be suppressed. The middle movement is somewhat akin to the *Allegretto* of the *Fifth Symphony*, while the finale is a polka-like movement in which the composer seems deliberately to be thumbing his nose at various nineteenth century composers, notably Rossini and Verdi.

A comparison of this recording with that of the Philadelphia Orchestra shows precious little difference in interpretation, strangely enough. The opening *Largo* offers Stokowski plenty of opportunity to display his penchant for "linked sweetness long drawn out", and he takes advantage of this in full measure; but Reiner's reading is closely akin to Stokowski's. Reiner imbues the other two movements with a greater degree of puckishness than Stokowski does. As for the recording, the newer set is more sharply focused, so to speak—more realistic. The orchestral balance is excellent and all the details of the score come through with great clarity, so much so that the banalities of the last two movements present themselves with greater emphasis than is comfortable. The surfaces are unusually quiet.

With the *Overture to Colas Breugnon*, Dmitry Kabalevsky makes his debut in the American catalogues, I believe. Kabalevsky was born in 1904 and is thus contemporary with Shostakovitch. His opera, to which

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this is the overture, is based on the novel of the same name by Romain Rolland, and thus far constitutes Kabalevsky's chief claim to fame in Russia. His *Second Symphony* and *Second Piano Concerto* have been heard in this country, among other large works. *Colas Breugnon* was written in 1937, and the overture has already established itself as a valuable five-minute filler-in on symphonic and radio programs. It is a sprightly, joyous piece, much in the style of the *Donna Diana* or the *Secret of Suzanne* Overtures. As may be surmised, this music occupies the tenth side of the set, which side is blank in the Philadelphia Orchestra album.

I would advise those interested in owning Shostakovich's *Sixth Symphony* to hear both recordings. Both have many merits and almost no defects.

—H.S.G.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Nutcracker Suite, Opus 71*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Victor set M or DM-1020, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Back in September 1942 Victor announced a recording of this work by Mr. Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra (set 915) which never materialized; one heard that some trouble had developed with one master. It is assumed that the present set is the same recording with the deficiency made up. As a recording it is admirably achieved from the standpoint of tonal realism, but there are some blemishes in my set, such as swishing sounds on several sides and a few slight scratches on side 3. Since this is one of the best things Ormandy has done for the phonograph and decidedly the most brilliant performance of the music on records, it is doubtful that most will notice the blemishes in the reproduction.

This being the season of nutcrackers, what with the nut bowl on the table for Thanksgiving and Christmas, Tchaikovsky's ballet is not inappropriate fare. The suite, of course, is enormously popular; but I wonder how many people know that the ballet from which it is drawn is a Christmas story, with a nutcracker that changes into a handsome prince.

It has always been a source of wonderment that the composer expressed himself as dissatisfied with this music, declaring in a letter to a friend on completing the composition

that it was "infinitely worse than *The Sleeping Beauty*". However, it is well-known that Tchaikovsky rarely believed in the excellence of his own work. The scoring of this ballet is extremely clever and I am sure a study of it has repaid a lot of composers since Tchaikovsky's time. The opening overture, where the composer has aimed for tonal brilliancy shows this cleverness; he uses only first and second violins and violas in his string section—no bass strings are employed. The *Danse des Mirlitons*, with its deft writing for the flutes, which have logically replaced the toy instruments that were employed in the first ballet performance, proves his gift for instrumentation, but one could point out many instrumental touches in the score as evidence of his striking ability as an orchestrator. One may tire of this music, but no musician would be apt to deny its values.

Mr. Ormandy lavishes considerable care on clarification of line and phrase, in fact his exploitation of precision almost amounts to regimentation. The performance shows what an alert ensemble the Philadelphia Orchestra has grown to be under his guidance. There may be some who would like more fancy applied to a performance of this music, but the fact remains that the instrumentation of the work is one of its major attractions, and Ormandy is not remiss in exploiting this element.

—P.H.R.

**WLADTEUFEL:** *The Skaters Waltz*; played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, direction of Arturo Toscanini. Victor disc 11-8949, price \$1.00.

▲ Although the Alsatian composer, Waldteufel, was a minor waltz king, he nonetheless wrote a number of compositions that have become so popular they can be found in countless arrangements, for barrel-organs, harmonicas and almost every known instrument Western man plays. Perhaps no composition of Waldteufel's has exceeded in popularity his *Skaters Waltz*. I can remember as a child churning it out on the old pianola and later skating to it in a public rink. Its ubiquitous strains recall countless experiences from the carrousel at Coney Island to the violin and accordion combination on a Hudson River boat, to say nothing of the ensembles on the old Staten Island ferry. It

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was the first waltz played by a salon group at my first dance on my initial trip to Europe; and so it goes. *The Skaters Waltz* is one of those things one takes for granted, it is played so often one probably never thinks about it being performed in concert, yet the truth of the matter is it is still heard in a lot of summer concerts where light music of its kind is accepted.

It may come as a surprise to a lot of Toscanini's admirers that he would be interested in a composition of this kind, and further that he would lavish the time and care on it that he would give to a Beethoven overture. But this only proves the versatility of the Maestro and how eclectic his tastes are. *The Skaters Waltz* is a darn good composition and I, for one, think that Toscanini proves that. I doubt that Waldteufel intended the waltz to be gently humorous or mere musical chaff, as many conductors regard it. Toscanini gives it a magnificent performance, which is matched by equally magnificent recording. There is more than casual evidence that the Maestro regards the music favorably in his affectionate handling of the opening half and in his precision of style in the latter part—has any of us been previously aware of the effective bass passages which the Maestro reveals so knowingly in the last half? One wonders, however, how many people will really appreciate, as it should be appreciated, the care that Toscanini has bestowed on this far too familiar work.

—P.H.R.

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### Concerto

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**BEETHOVEN:** *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37*; played by Artur Schnabel and the NBC Symphony Orchestra, Arturo Toscanini, conductor. Victor set M or DM 1016, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ It is a rare occurrence indeed when a recorded performance of a concerto is just about as near perfect as is possible to make it—soloist, orchestra, conductor, and reproduction. The present set is, happily, in that category. Those who have heard Rubinstein play this concerto with Toscanini and the NBC Orchestra must have carried away with them an unforgettable experience. This

is recreated here in a most admirable fashion.

There have been recordings of this concerto in the past by Schnabel and Iturbi, as well as others which never achieved re-pressing in this country. Even if the fidelity of reproduction in this set were no improvement on the older ones, it would still be our first choice. But on this score, it is of surpassing excellence. Perfect balance, clarity of detail, absence of shrillness in the loud passages, quiet surfaces—all of these attributes go to make a set which for technical excellence establishes a mark for the engineers to shoot at in the future.

But what is even more valuable is the superb traversal of this score by the Rubinstein-Toscanini partnership, and the splendid playing of the orchestra. Toscanini, always a transcendent interpreter of Beethoven's music, does not let us down here; and although Schnabel's reading of this work is generally considered ideal, Rubinstein need yield no ground to him. One might prefer a more leisurely pace in the delicately expressive *Largo*, such as both Schnabel and Iturbi achieve; but Rubinstein and Toscanini play this movement with such a nice feeling for nuance and phrasing, that the listener does not receive the impression that the tempo is hurried in the least. The opening movement is beautifully spaced and hits the right serious note. Rubinstein makes some changes in Beethoven's cadenza near the end of it, but does nothing to it that will outrage even the most rabid Beethovenite. The finale goes its merry way, and the galloping coda wears an air of pert insouciance.

This concerto was written in 1800, and is therefore a "first period" work. Beethoven had already written the *Sonata Pathétique* and the *String Quartet in C minor*; and had left the *Third Piano Trio*, which had puzzled his contemporaries, far behind. All of these four works (all in the same key, by the way) pointed the direction toward which Beethoven was headed—the *Eroica* Symphony and the *Waldstein* and *Appassionata* Sonatas. In these later works the thunder (the faint rumblings of which may be heard in the four earlier ones) peals forth as if the heavens would be torn asunder.

We predict that this set will be acclaimed on all counts for a long time to come. If you wish a recording of this concerto, get this Victor album by all means. —H.S.G.

BRUCH: *Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Opus 26*; played by Yehudi Menuhin (violin) and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, direction of Pierre Monteux. Victor set M or DM-1023, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Menuhin was fifteen when he first recorded this concerto with the late Sir Landon Ronald and the London Symphony in 1932. It is therefore not surprising to find the violinist's present performance revealing greater breadth of tone and artistic maturity. In November 1942 Columbia gave us a performance of this work by Nathan Milstein and the N.Y. Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of John Barbirolli. At that time we found Milstein's playing the most enjoyable of the several performances that were available on records. Milstein's performance is still estimable for its rare suavity of tone, its effortless handling of the double stops and other technical features of the score. Unfortunately for Milstein, neither Barbirolli's handling of the orchestral part nor Columbia's rather gaunt reproduction of the orchestra does him full justice.

Menuhin has excellent orchestral support here and splendid reproduction; of the several conductors who have accompanied the violinists performing this concerto on records, Monteux is the most proficient. It is he who sets the pace for the finale, marking its energy and momentum in a way that sweeps the violinist along with him and makes this performance of that movement the most exciting on records. Technically, Menuhin is not as smooth as Milstein, but there is more heart in his playing. Some might say he sentimentalizes the slow movement, but this would not be quite true; he brings to his playing a more dulcet tone than Milstein but he is not guilty, to our way of thinking, of descending to lush romanticism as Campoli did in his short-lived recording. The Campoli recording no longer concerns us; it was far too lush for its own good. Menuhin unquestionably has a regard for this music and he plays it very well indeed. The bite he gets to the finale is a true observance of the composer's marking—*Allegro energico*; Milstein reverted too often to tonal suavity for the good of the music here and Barbirolli's whipping up of the work when on his own was not always consistent with Bruch's intentions.

As we observed in our previous review, Bruch's orchestration is not too clear; his writing for strings aimed to exploit the harmonies rather than the contrapuntal lines. Some of the inner voices are submerged in the present recording but this cannot be blamed wholly on Monteux; as we have already stated he does more with the score than most conductors.

The choice of sets will depend upon one's admiration of the featured artist. However, the better ensemble here places this set well in the forefront, though some may feel with us that Milstein's rare tonal suavity is not something to be lightly dismissed. —P.H.R.

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### Chamber Music

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MOZART: *Quintet in C major, K. 515*; played by the Budapest String Quartet with Milton Katims (viola). Columbia set M or MM-586, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ Mozart's string quintets rank, in my estimation, with the last quartets of Beethoven; they reflect the imaginative activities of the mature artist, an awareness of the mysteries of existence, and an emotional purity which is in no way personalized. There is in the slow movements especially of both the *G minor* and *C major Quintets* a compassionate note which suggests a broader feeling for humanity, such as Beethoven manifested. The *C major* was completed April 19, 1787 (Cobbett errs in this, giving May 19 as the date), and the *G minor* May 16. On May 29, Mozart's father died. The illness of his father unquestionably affected him deeply, and there can be little question that he anticipated his father's demise. The *G minor* has been called by some writers "a song of death". This is assumed because a month before he composed this work Mozart wrote his father that he had familiarized himself for some years past "with that true and faithful friend of man", and in so doing had found "peace and consolation". The *G minor* with its more passionate lyricism has overshadowed the *C major* in popularity for many years, yet it is a less uniform work, for its Papageno-like finale is completely alien to its other three movements. There is a somber note to the first three movements of the *G minor*,



a key that was associated with some of Mozart's most searching writing, in which there is both a simplicity of expression and an Olympian grandeur. But with Mozart the key of C major, the plainest of all the keys, became, as Einstein has pointed out, "a shining goal, a glorious revelation". The transition into A-flat in the opening *Allegro* reveals Mozart's gift for harmonic variation. The writing here is a rare intermixture of homophony and counterpoint. The *C major* has long held me under its spell and I still feel that it is a more compelling work than the *G minor*—one cannot call it greater, because the greatness of these last quintets are irrefutable and the best often seems the work that one is listening to at the moment.

This first movement is one of sharply contrasted moods, it is a drama of subtle contrasts. There are pride and confidence in the strong pulsating rhythm of the opening section; this leads into a reverie which expands itself leisurely, and which in turn leads into a short dramatic conflict where anxiety and foreboding are apparent. The development is richly dramatic, and the recapitulation emerges from this asserting anew the depth of the composer's feeling. The movement ends in a serene manner. The Menuetto, which follows, is no court dance, but the expression of a troubled soul, and yet in its divided expression of formal dignity and lyrical graciousness there is a suggestion of emotional concealment. This is most apparent in the Trio, which owns a great sadness. The *Andante* is not muted, like the slow movement of the *G minor*, but it is equally affecting. It is melodic beauty at its height, and does not ask for words to describe it, only willing ears to listen. The manner in which Mozart uses the violin and the viola in an intimate duet deserves to be commented upon. The finale is light-hearted, free of all melancholy, carefree yet in keeping with what has gone before.

An understanding of Mozart's use of the second viola in his string quintets, in preference to the second cello which Schubert later used, is necessary for the fullest enjoyment of the works. The melancholy tone of the viola appealed to him; it provided a rich texture to the middle register, it offered opportunities for more profound and impassioned music and allowed for a clarity of line which two cellos do not always provide. The

second viola frequently plays an important part in the conversational character of the music. In the recording of the *G minor* by the same group of players the viola lines were often too submerged for the good of the music; one returned to the old Pro Arte Quartet, with Alfred Hobday, for a better clarification of inner lines; there the first viola was a true feature of the performance. Here, although there is a better balance, there is not the same clarity of viola line as in the old set; especially is this true in the opening movement. Yet it would be untrue to say that this is not a fine performance of the work, one in which all-pervasive emotion is linked to true technical resourcefulness. The older set has been withdrawn from Victor's catalogue, which is a great pity, for it remains a definite challenge to this one; indeed I think the Pro Arte-Hobday combination brought more drama to the opening movement, and, in each of the succeeding parts, gave equally as appreciable a performance. The recording here is in most ways better than in the older set, but I would have liked more of the *pianissimo* that the ensemble attains in a concert hall. I would rather have a bit of surface sound than a *pianissimo* lifted to a *mezzo forte*, with the concomitant loss of sensitivity of line and feeling. All of which makes us realize the

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shortcomings of a recorded as opposed to a living performance, but it should not deter us from enjoying music as wonderful as this. Anyone not owning a set of the *C major Quintet* should buy this one; it will provide many rewarding hours of musical listening, for in this work, as in the *G minor*, Mozart voices the deepest feelings which found release in his chamber music. —P.H.R.

**MOZART:** Sonatas for Organ and Orchestra—*Sonata in D major, K. 144*, *Sonata in F major, K. 244* (disc 11-8909), *Sonata in D major, K. 245*, *Sonata in C major, K. 278* (disc 11-8910), *Sonata in C major, K. 328*, *Sonata in C major, K. 336* (disc 11-8911); played by E. Power Biggs (organ) and the Arthur Fiedler Sinfonietta, directed by Arthur Fiedler. Victor set M-1019, price \$3.50.

▲ Mozart wrote in all some seventeen so-called organ sonatas, mostly scored for organ and strings. An exception in the scoring is found here in the *C major Sonata, K. 278*, where oboes, trumpets and kettle-drums are added. The general view among writers on the composer is that these works reveal little lasting vitality, a view with which the great body of Mozart admirers may or may not agree. Certainly, Messrs. Biggs and Fiedler give performances in which taste and musicianship are well displayed—and, in so doing, present a case for the preservation of this music, or should we say its revival in performance? There is novelty in these works, for the combination of the organ and the orchestra is unusual. It is a difficult combination to write for, and, as Philip Miller (our associate editor) once said in reviewing another recording of two of the sonatas, K. 145 and 329 (Columbia disc 69625-D—withdrawn), one cannot honestly say that Mozart has been altogether successful. "The simple fact is the organ does not blend too well with the orchestra, but presents a problem in intonation similar to that of the piano."

The organ sonatas were imposed tasks. They were written while the composer was in service to the Archbishop of Salzburg. The fact that they are all in one movement and rather brief is due to their having been written at the behest of the Archbishop as voluntaries or interpolations in the mass.

Since the masses were short—forty-five minutes in duration—the voluntary could not be more than a few minutes long. Examination of these works shows how ingenious Mozart was; each is written in the sonata form, albeit with development sections of only a few measures. Mr. Biggs points out in the notes with this set that the works are not "all religious in the liturgical sense of the word—for in his writing Mozart makes no distinction between music for the church or for the concert hall". Mr. Biggs further says that the sonatas "are music of affirmation and cheerfulness". This is true enough, but though they bear "in every bar the imprint and individuality of the composer", one feels that they are not representative of Mozart at his best; to our way of thinking his heart was not always in his task. As Mr. Miller has said, they are full of echoes of other and better works by the composer, and their charm would undeniably have been greater if "we had not heard it all before".

If Mozart does not give us great pleasure here, he does provide some enjoyment, and there is interest in his writing for the organ. The *C major Sonata, K. 278* is a gallant little work, full of exultation, and the *C major, K. 328* has dash and verve, a sprightliness that must have seemed strange in the middle of a mass—coming as it did between the Epistle and the Gospel. The last sonata, *K. 336*, has some charming writing for the organ and Mr. Biggs plays it with evident relish. The performances by Messrs. Biggs and Fiedler are alert and technically proficient, the rhythmic impetus being especially appreciable. The recording does justice to the performers. —P.H.R.

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#### Instrumental

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**BENJAMIN:** *Jamaican Rumba, Maltzy Rag, Cookie* (arr. Primrose), *From San Domingo*; played by William Primrose (viola) with Vladimir Sokoloff at the piano. Victor disc 11-8947, price \$1.00.

▲ These are mildly diverting musical novelties, not much more than trifles, upon which Mr. Primrose lavishes his extraordinary musical gifts, making them momentarily seem much more important than they are. The



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Australian-born Arthur Benjamin is said to have made a study of native folk music in Jamaica and neighboring British Islands, which resulted in these pieces. The old question of whether folk music is best served by a studied arrangement or by a natural, spontaneous expression is raised here. No native group playing similar music would resort to the ingenious effects of string plucking and harmonic coloring that Benjamin has given us. Those who like humor in music, and surely it belongs there as much as anywhere else, will perhaps find these pieces amusing. I hardly think that the composer could have found a more persuasive spokesman for them than Mr. Primrose, and others like myself may wish to own the disc solely for the violinist's artistry. Mr. Sokoloff ably backs up the violinist, and the recording is excellent except for a curious whistling sound in the opening grooves of the second side.

—P.H.R.

MASSENET (arr. Marsick); *Thais—Meditation*; and DVORAK (arr. Wilhelmj): *Humoresque*; played by Mischa Elman (violin) and Leopold Mittman (piano). Victor disc 11-8950, price \$1.00.

▲ For every musical listener who might wish that Elman played something more substantial, there will be at least a hundred who will be tickled to death that he has re-recorded two old favorites. Elman made his first *Humoresque* recording over fifteen years ago and it is still the most popular of the many Elman recordings listed in the Victor catalogue.

If it is difficult for me to appreciate these pieces at this late day, it is not impossible for me to note that Elman plays them with a finer musicality than he previously did; there is less evidence here of exploitation of sugary tone, more effort to be straightforward and to permit the music to speak for itself. This is an Elman disc for the multitudes; it may very well pay for his performance of some very worthwhile sonata, and those of us who do not like the music can pass it up without comment on the violinist's meeting of public demands. Mr. Mittman gives Mr. Elman satisfactory accompaniments; I doubt very much that many would feel with me that a little more piano would have served the proceedings advantageously.

—P.H.R.

## Keyboard

J. S. BACH: *Aria with Thirty Variations* (*The "Goldberg" Variations*); played by Wanda Landowska, harpsichordist. Victor set M or DM 1022, six discs, price \$6.50.

▲ The "*Goldberg*" Variations were written by Bach at the height of his maturity, probably in 1743. Johann Nicolas Forkel, Bach's first biographer, received the information concerning the origin of this work from Bach's sons. A certain Count Kayserling, to whom Bach was indebted for having procured Bach the appointment of Court Composer, and who was an insomniac, asked Bach to write some music for his clavichordist, Johann Theophilus Goldberg, to play to him when he felt wakeful. Bach decided that a set of variations would answer the purpose, and composed thirty on a theme from the ground-bass of a sarabande that he found in Anna Magdalena Bach's Note Book of 1725. The Count was so pleased that he sent the composer a gold goblet containing one hundred louis d'or.

Bach treats this theme in passacaglia style, making it the basis for an astounding series of variations. The theme, for example, appears in canon at every interval from the unison to the ninth, some of them in contrary motion. One variation is in the form of a fughetta, another an Overture in the French Style, one a siciliana, and so forth. The last variation is a quadlibet, in which two popular songs are worked together over the original basis of the theme. Several variations have either emotional, imaginative or technical elements in predominance. The three variations in the minor mode add an effect of chiaroscuro to the composition.

A lesser composer, setting himself a task such as is briefly outlined above, would have written what the Germans call eye-music, that is, music that looks well on paper but lacks spontaneity and feeling. Many such works have been written that are merely dry, pedantic, and wanting in vitality. Bach, however, turns the trick of making each of the canons sound perfectly natural and inevitable, as if tossed off with ease. Such a command of technical resources is amazing,

but he employs them only as a means to an end—they constitute but the vehicle for his emotions. There is nothing like these variations in the whole range of music. The wonderful variety of mood and style and great mystery of technical device hold the listener's attention throughout. Forkel declared the work worth a thousand times the honorarium Bach received for it, to which statement many another musician has agreed. It certainly represents the utmost development in Bach's powers.

The Variations are written for a two-manual clavier, although several of them can be played on one manual.

No one but Mme. Landowska has recorded this work, and it is just as well that no one else has attempted to do so. She transforms the thirty variations into thirty mood-pictures, no two alike; and it is one of the wonders of her interpretative art that she can prevent a work written for a solo instrument, comprising twenty-seven variations in G major and three in G minor, and taking almost an hour to perform, from becoming monotonous. In addition, she conceives the work as a unified whole, so that it never seems to consist of separate pieces; and approaches them with a profound insight into their spirit that leaves no room for comment. The rhythm and phrasing that she imparts to the work have to be heard to be believed. But there they are, engraved in wax, for all time.

This recording should not be confused with the one made by Mme. Landowska several years ago in Paris, and issued by "His Master's Voice" in a Bach Society limited addition, available only to subscribers. The earlier set failed to do justice to the registration used by the artist at that recording session, and precluded the extensive use of the 16-foot coupler; whereas this set brings out every possible tone-color and nuance that went into the microphone. The reproduction is amazingly lifelike.

A handsome album with copious historical, analytical and descriptive notes houses the records. A footnote suggests that the volume control of the reproducing instrument be adjusted so that the level of sound is somewhat less than what you would normally hear from a piano reproduction.

I would say that this issue is, from a purely musical standpoint, the most important since

the outbreak of the war. It is extremely difficult to write a reasoned review of these records, because of the tendency toward nothing but superlatives!

—H.S.G.

## Voice

APPALACHIAN FOLK SONG (arr. John J. Niles): *I Wonder as I Wander*; and MIGNONE: (*Cantiga de Ninar*; sung by Gladys Swarthout (mezzo-soprano), with Victor Orchestra, conducted by Jay Blackton in the first, and with piano by Lester Hodges and cello by Lucien Schmidt in the second. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1181, price 75c.

▲ Miss Swarthout has chosen two rarely appealing songs this month. The folk piece has long been a favorite with the singer's radio audiences and in concert she rates it her favorite encore. This lovely folk song deserves a more auspicious place than as an encore in any program, and Miss Swarthout sings it very well indeed. The companion song is a moving Lullaby by the Brazilian composer Francisco Mignone. Miss Swarthout sings it with dignity and restraint—others might be tempted to sentimentalize such an appealing selection. The accompaniment by Mr. Hodges and Mr. Schmidt is admirable for its artistic restraint. Although I would have preferred the piano in the folk song, it cannot be said that the accompaniment heard here is objectionable and the conductor is competent.

Both these songs exploit the dark qualities of the singer's voice, which does not make for clarity of diction, but Miss Swarthout manages to make herself understood. The Mignone *Lullaby* she sings in the original Portuguese. The recording is first-rate.

—P.G.

FAMILIAR HYMNS; sung by the St. Luke's Choristers of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Long Beach, California, conducted by William Ripley Dorr, with organ accompaniments by Chauncey Haines and orchestra conducted by Roy Bargy. Capitol B-D 15, four 10-inch discs. Price \$2.50.

▲ The hymns are —*Holy, Holy, Holy*; O



*Love that Wilt not Let Me Go; Jesus, Lover of my Soul* (with organ); *Now the Day Is Over; Saviour, Again to Thy Dear Name* (with Philip Haymes, boy soprano, as soloist); *Lead, Kindly Light* (with orchestra); *He Leadeth Me* (with Philip Haymes as soloist); *The Church's One Foundation; For Thee, O Dear, Dear Country* (with organ); *Onward Christian Soldiers; Abide with Me* (with organ).

The St. Luke's Choristers are indeed a fine vocal ensemble, comprising some 51 voices—if one follows the count in the photo of them within the album; at least 29 of these would seem to be boys whose voices are unusually fresh and well trained. The recording was apparently made in St. Paul's Cathedral in Los Angeles, since the notes tell us that Chauncey Haines, Jr. is at the console of that organ in those recordings employing organ. The one record employing string orchestra adds nothing of distinction to the hymns, unless, of course, one regards a sugary solo violin as an asset. This sort of thing was hardly needed, in our estimation.

California makes a bid for nation-wide approval in church singing in this set; it is justified in its pride in this church organization. The choristers are well balanced and excellently trained (any choir master knows the difficulty of obtaining precision and uniformity of style from a group containing as many boy sopranos and altos as this one has). Young Philip Haymes has a pleasing voice, and he sings naturally and unaffectedly; his solos are incidental ones, which is a pity, because he would have been worth hearing in a solo recording all his own.

Capitol has provided excellent recording but the surfaces of its records are not as smooth as they might be. —P.G.

**JEWISH FOLK SONGS**, from Eastern Europe and Palestine; sung by Ruth Rubin, with chorus and instrumental background. Asch Set 607, three 10-inch discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Miss Rubin, who hails from Canada, possesses a pleasant voice. Yiddish is not what could be termed a musical language, but Miss Rubin manages to make it more agreeable than a lot of other singers I have heard. She has for a number of years devoted herself to the study of modern Jewish secular folk

songs. The material she presents here is diversified and well chosen, and her accompaniments are all in keeping with folk tradition. Those who admire folk music, engagingly rendered, will do well to investigate this album.

The songs are *Farbenkt*, an Eastern European love song, *Mit a Nodl, On a Nodl* (*With a Needle, without a Needle*), a tailor's song from Bessarabia, *Zirmu Galim*, a Palestinian love song, *Artsa Alinu*, a Palestinian hora, and *Kegen Gold Fun Zun* (from the Ukraine) and *Zhankoye* (from the Crimea), two collective-farm songs. The love songs are plaintive and heartfelt; the first with its clarinet accompaniment recalls the beloved far away and entreats the Lord to reunite the singer with his loved one. The second, *Zirmu Galim*, bids a stream flow "to my beloved one far away and bring blessings without end"; it has a strong Slavic undertone. The Palestinian hora is a vivacious dance song, all too short, and the tailor's song is most appealing. The two collective-farm songs, performed with chorus, are buoyant and full of rollicking good humor. The first expresses the joy of the Jewish farmer on his equality in the Soviet Union, where he is permitted to own a farm, which under Czarist rule had not been possible. The second is about a railroad station which centralized a whole network of Jewish collective farms in the Crimea. —P.G.

**MOZART: Don Giovanni—Il mio tesoro** (in Italian), *The Magic Flute—O Image Angel-like and Fair* (in English) (disc 11-8929); **MASSENET: Manon—Le Rêve and Ah fuyez, douce image (in French) (disc 11-8930); **WAGNER: Lohengrin—In fernem Land**, and *Die Meistersinger—Preislied* (in German) (disc 11-8931); sung by James Melton (tenor), with Victor Orchestra, conducted by Paul Breisach. Victor set M-1013, price \$3.50.**

▲ One agrees with the *N.Y. Times* reviewer who said that "Melton has a voice and knows how to use it". He sings with admirable forthrightness and vocal certainty. There will be those who commend him for his shunning of sentimentalism here, while others will miss the nuance of phrasing and the expressive warmth that other tenors bring to their singing of these arias. One suspects

that Melton does not know foreign languages as well as he might, since in the French and German selections he fails to nuance certain phrases as if to the manner born. In both languages his diction leaves much to be desired. One admires his manly straightforward singing of the *Don Giovanni* aria, and while he does not efface the memory of others who brought more stylistic refinement to their singing, he certainly gives a more estimable performance than some. Mozart in English is open to controversy, but Melton brings stylistic dignity to his voicing of Tamino's aria, enunciating all the words clearly and thereby showing his admirable command of his own language. But many of these English words are ill-fitting for the best musical results.

In the *Dream* aria from *Manon*, the tenor avoids the romantic quality that rightly belongs to this air. He suggests the novice in love who can speak his piece but not give it tender meaning. More refinement of style is required in this selection. Melton fares much better in the aria from the church scene, where Des Grieux is about to take his vows; his singing is more fervent, more convincing, although his theatrical touches are questionable. In Lohengrin's *Narrative* the tenor fails to bring to his recital the feeling of wonderment or the auspiciousness of the revelation. The lyric qualities of Walther's *Prize-Song* fit his voice better; here he shows an admirable command of his voice.

The orchestral accompaniments are tonally satisfactory, but Breisach's conducting is decidedly uneven, his Wagnerian work being below the standard of his Massenet and Mozart. The reproduction is realistic.—P.G.

**MOZART: *Il Re Pastore***—*L'amero, saro costante*, sung by Lily Pons, soprano, with the Columbia Opera Orchestra, conducted by Bruno Walter; violin obbligato by Mishel Piastro. Columbia disc, No. 71696-D, price \$1.

▲ *Il Re Pastore*, which opera is remembered today only by this aria, was composed in 1775 by the nineteen-year-old Mozart for a celebration in honor of the visit to Salzburg of the Archduke Maximilian, younger brother of Marie Antoinette. The libretto was by Metastasio, most famous of opera poets in his time. The story concerns a king, Aminta,

who refuses his crown because of his love for the shepherdess Elisa, but whose fidelity is finally rewarded when he is established on the throne with Elisa as his queen. *L'amero, saro costante* is his song of faithfulness. The apparent inconsistency of this aria being sung by a soprano is explained by the fact that the opera was written in the days of the *castrati*, and the role of the king was originally sung by a male soprano.

There have been a number of fine recordings of this lovely aria, from the early Melba and Kubelik version down through those of Schumann, Rethberg and Ritter-Ciampi. But to Miss Pons, it would seem, goes the honor of making the first complete performance for the phonograph. The aria is in rondo form, but it has usually been found convenient to cut it down to a sort of short *aria da capo*, which, with the traditional cadenza for voice and violin (not, incidentally, found in the Mozart score) fits neatly onto one twelve-inch side. True, the tempo usually adopted is faster than that in which Miss Pons luxuriates here, but that, to my taste, is to the good. Perhaps having such ample record space has induced the lady to spread herself a little, but for all Mr. Walter's conducting, the result lacks the true Mozartean vitality and sparkle.

Vocally the soprano is at her best. There is more appeal in her lower and medium voice than is usually found in sopranos of her type. In fact she has always seemed to me essentially a lyrical rather than a brilliant singer. In passage work she is inclined to be a bit too careful. This then may not be the definitive recording of the music, but the charm of the Pons voice and name will probably bring the aria to many hearers who might otherwise miss it. The recording of voice, violin and orchestra is satisfactory, though there is some heightening of the volume at the change-over between the two sides. —P.M.

**PESTALOZZA: *Ciribiribin***; and Kreisler: *The Old Refrain*; sung by Grace Moore (soprano), with Victor Orchestra conducted by Maximilian Pilzer. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1152, price 75c.

▲ These are two old favorites with Miss Moore's concert audiences and many are the requests for her to sing one or the other as

an encore. Pestalozza's waltz is a love song seemingly addressed to a maiden with the extraordinary name of Ciribiribin. It has long been popular in Italy as well as this country and probably elsewhere too. Miss Moore sings it delightfully, with just the right touch of humor. Kreisler's *The Old Refrain* is too well known to comment upon; its tender sentiment appeals to the many rather than the few. Miss Moore sings it *con sentimento* with far too many ritards for my liking, but this stress of sentiment and lingering over a word here and there is the sort of thing most people love. Miss Moore's diction is admirable in both selections and vocally she is at her best. It may be quibbling but I wish she had not carried the Kreisler song up at the end; the simpler this sort of thing is done the better it remains. The orchestral accompaniment of Mr. Pilzer is good, but he and the singer are not always together in the first song. The recording offers a good balance between singer and orchestra. —P.G.

**PROKOFIEV:** *Alexander Nevsky (Cantata)* Op. 78; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy, conductor, with Jennie Tourel, mezzo-soprano and the Westminster Choir, John Finley Williamson, conductor. Columbia set M or MM 580, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ We have no hesitancy in asserting that the cantata *Alexander Nevsky* is one of the few great scores to have come out of Soviet Russia. It is impossible not to be deeply moved by the spirit of the text and the music which mirrors it so effectively. Prokofiev's earnestness of purpose and heartfelt sympathy with his subject is magnificently reflected in the score which he has written. Here there is none of the irony, mockery or japey that we usually associate with the name of this composer—all is seriousness and high-mindedness.

The music depicts the story of the Russians' defense of Novgorod against the Teutonic Knights in 1242—one of the bloodiest pages in Russia's history. To quote Paul Affelder's notes accompanying the album: "These knights, who were originally crusaders, turned militaristic, and, on the pretense of Christianizing East Prussia and portions of Russia, overran these territories."

This is music of great impact and forcefulness. The score is fairly elaborate, and all of its details can not be assimilated at one or two hearings. Suffice to say that repeated hearings will impress the listener with growing intensity.

The music for the film by the same name, directed and produced by Sergei Eisenberg, was written by Prokofiev in 1938, who was so deeply affected by the story that he expanded the music to its present form, writing the text himself, and completing the score the following year. America first heard the cantata over the radio in 1943 and again in 1944, Miss Tourel being the soloist on both occasions. The first American performance in a concert hall took place early in 1945, with the same orchestra, chorus and conductors that have participated in the present performance, but with a different soloist.

A condensation of Mr. Affelder's synopsis follows:

"To meet the onslaught in Novgorod, the people called upon their Prince, Alexander Nevsky, to lead them against the foe. On April 5, 1242, the people of Novgorod met the Germans and defeated the enemy. As the result of this heroic defense of his country, Alexander Nevsky became an immortal Russian hero and a fine symbol of valor to the present day fighters in the Soviet Union.

"The cantata is composed of seven musical pictures, each of which presents a phase of this famous national epic." The titles of these are: *I. Russia under the Mongolian Yoke; II. Song about Alexander Nevsky; III. The Crusaders in Pskov; IV. Arise, Ye Russian People; V. The Battle on the Ice; VI. Field of the Dead; VII. Alexander's Entry into Pskov.*

The music is sung in English, with the exception of that allotted to the crusaders, which is, appropriately, in Latin. The full text is incorporated in the album notes. A miniature score is in the press.

Of the performance, we can only say that the orchestra is superb throughout, and the chorus generally so. Those familiar with Miss Tourel's art need no words of praise from us. She seems to have felt the text with genuine sincerity and she displays high musicianship in her interpretation. There are one or two places where the intonation of the chorus seems to us a trifle vague, but this may be due to the scoring.

As for the recording, there are some roughnesses in the louder passages, which may be due to overamplification. It is suggested that the treble control be turned down somewhat on sides 8 and 9, containing Miss Tourel's solo. Normal reproduction lends a stridency to her voice which assuredly does not exist in reality. It may be added that we found it impossible to play this set with a sapphire. With steel the surfaces are very quiet.

Altogether, a set not to be missed.—H.S.G.

SCHUBERT: *Songs from Die Winterreise*, Op. 89, Volume II: No. 3, *Gefrör'ne Tränen*; No. 4, *Erstarrung*; No. 9, *Irrlicht*; No. 12, *Einsamkeit*; No. 14, *Der greise Kopf*; No. 24, *Der Leiermann*; sung by Lotte Lehmann, soprano, with Paul Ulanowsky at the piano. Columbia set M-587, three ten-inch discs, price \$2.75.

▲ With this set Mme. Lehmann completes her recording of *Die Winterreise*. Or perhaps I should say recordings, for not only were the earlier components released as long ago as 1940 and 1941, but they do not all even bear the same company label, the singer having shifted her allegiance between releases from Victor to Columbia. This completion of a project started by a rival company seems to be a part of present Columbia policy—as witness the recent third act of *Die Walküre*. But whereas in the Wagner drama there is hardly an attempt at unity among the recordings of the three acts, in the case of *Die Winterreise* we have the same singer and pianist throughout, the only bars to continuity being the order in which the songs have been presented and the variance in the recording. I should like in this review to approach the song cycle as a whole, playing through the songs in their proper order (which, I may as well add, would involve more juggling of sides and half-sides than I imagine most collectors would be willing to undertake) but I am not at present able to get at my copies of the two older sets. I cannot, therefore, speak of consistency in either performance or recording. In referring back to my former reviews I find that I considered the reproduction and the balance in the Victor set good, and those in the Columbia a bit better. The new records seem to me to favor the voice unduly and to leave some-

thing to be desired in the tone of the piano. The voice itself sounds rich and warm—characteristic Lehmann.

In both of my former reviews I stated what to me remains the obvious truth, that *Die Winterreise* as a cycle is greater than the sum of its parts. There is a connected story told in these deeply moving songs, each of which is a mood picture so planned and placed that the cumulative effect is one of the most desolating things in music. And I have already referred in this review to the difficulties under which one must work in order to bring a unity to Mme. Lehmann's performance. So for the third time I resign myself to hearing the songs individually. As always the singer's sincerity is evident in every phrase she sings, even when these phrases are broken by heavy breathing. I could wish for a little more movement in *Gefrör'ne Tränen* (which like so many of these songs seems to me to call for a "walking" tempo) and more drive in *Erstarrung*. But all of these songs, with the other two albums, will stand to show posterity the approach of an artist whose prestige in the field of lieder is without rival in our day. Mme. Lehmann may also teach interpretation and write books about it, but here is the actual thing as she wishes us to have it. —P.M.

### In the Popular Vein

▲ Freddy Martin (Victor) runs off a smooth Martin rendition of *In the Middle of May*. This is by far one of Freddy's best recordings to date. The "Martin Men" deserve a hand on the vocal rendering. The flip side of this disc is called *Symphony* with American version written or suggested by, or connected in some way with, Jack Lawrence. The vocal refrain is sung by Clude Rogers. In my opinion you should drop the first syllable in the title.

▲ Duke Ellington (Victor) jumps up with *Come To Baby Do*. His little gal Joya Sherrill shines with her sometimes off-key vocal. The Duke's famous boys weave in and out with Joya on a neatly packaged record. I think you might hear some more of this plate. From M-G-M motion picture *Easy To Wed* comes *Tell Ya What I'm Going To Do* in which the Duke colors Joya's fine vocal as only he can.

▲Dinah Shore slides into a swingster *But I Did* backed by *As Long As I Live* from Warner Bros.' picture *Saratoga Trunk*. *But I Did* has a nice jump to it that Dinah handles well. The other is smozzy and makes you love Dinah all the more.

▲*High Price Blues* (Bluebird)—Blues, blues of the wrap 'em up, knock 'em out, beat it around a little kind. It's good for any money! The lyrics are executed bluesy enough by Roosevelt Sykes but mean little. Flipped we have *Honeydripper*, which does itself proud in the beginning but falls through as this platter runs on its merry way.

▲Billy Williams (Victor) waxed the pleasing record called *When I Marry I'll Marry For Love*; it maintains the cowboy flavor with a full orchestra behind the singer. The flip side drips with sentiment, bearing the title *You've Nobody Til Somebody Loves You*. 'Nuff said!

▲Tommy Dorsey (Victor) pushes his boys through the hoops with a swing arrangement of *Chloe* that has a lot of brass. The beginning sounds as though you might be in for one of Tommy's classics; a lot of attention should be given to the sax solo three-quarters through the recording. We swing from a vocal on *At The Fat Mans* by Charlie Shavers with personality plus, into a brassy solo on the trumpet and then move into full band work that kicks off in true Sy Oliver style. *At the Fat Mans'* comes close to a good Dorsey.

▲*Jazz at the Philharmonic* (Asch Set) by Norman Granz. The interesting and eventful thing about this collection of three discs just waxed is that it is the first recording of a real jam session, with all the spontaneity and improvisations of all the musicians involved, including some of the chatter that goes with a band or group of artists that have no idea that they are being recorded. The album is not, admittedly, the ultimate in jazz or necessarily the best performance of each of the artists. You will, without any doubt hear a reproduction of a true jam. Nothing is barred, nothing is left out, including the gang of wide-eyed listeners that shout their heads off after each solo. The personnel are Garland Finney (piano), Red Callandar (bass), Ulysses Livingston (guitar), Joe Guy (trumpet), Illinois Jacquet (tenor sax), Howard McGhee (trumpet), Charles Ventura (tenor sax), Willie Smith (alto sax),

Chicago Flash (drums). On the whole I feel as though this is a grand flop. So much more could have been done if the personnel were of a higher standard, a standard closer to real jazz.

▲Coleman Hawkins (Asch Set). Here all the musical virtues of Hawkins are reproduced on wax for review by people who admire good musicianship; "Sir" Charles Thompson plays wonderful piano, Howard McGhee is on trumpet or drums, Daniel Best and Eddie Robinson on the basses. *Bean Stalking* and *Ladies Lullaby* are outstanding among six wonderful sides. The four other titles are *Sportsman Hop* with fine piano work; *Leave my Heart Alone*, where the Hawk plays among the kings; *Night Ramble*, which has a marvelous arrangement; and then last but not least, *Ready For Love*, with some fine slow legato work by the Hawk.

—Lew G. Lane

### From Duet to Sextet

(Continued from page 97)

De Gogorza's fiery understanding of his part seems convincing, though his voice shakes a little in moments of dramatic stress. Nor have modern critics dealt kindly with the Eames-De Gogorza version (89023) of *Crudel perche finora* from *Nozze di Figaro*, pointing out that Eames' voice sounds hard, unyielding and her singing not in keeping with Mozart's music. De Gogorza, however, carries off his half of the duet with charm and élan, in the true Mozartean spirit. The International Record Collector's Club (IRCC) has re-issued both of these recordings.

The Red Seal vocal records of the following months were all solos until, in December, three Farrar duets appeared. The most important of these was the same *Nozze di Figaro* duet recorded a few months earlier by Eames and De Gogorza, to which Farrar's version, with Scotti as the baritone, makes a provocative contrast. Since neither performance completely satisfies me, I have always wished that Victor had paired its artists differently and given Farrar and De Gogorza a try at it. Farrar and Scotti made a best-seller out of the inevitable *Tales of Hoffmann Barcarolle* (89027), also released in December, but it is not sufficiently lush to appeal to the type of music lover who wants to buy a record of the *Barcarolle* in 1945.

(To be Continued)



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